

## PRESS RELEASE

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## IRS-CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION WARNS OF PERVASIVE TELEPHONE SCAM

In an effort to help the taxpayers of New Jersey protect themselves from becoming victimized, IRS-Criminal Investigation Acting Special Agent in Charge Jonathan D. Larsen, Newark Field Office, wants to alert and educate them about an aggressive ongoing telephone scam.

In general, IRS related scams tend to pick up during the tax filing season and then slow down after April 15<sup>th</sup>. But this particular telephone scam has not shown any signs of letting up.

The phone call received by potential victims can seem very realistic and legitimate. Potential victims are told they owe money to the IRS and it must be paid promptly through a pre-loaded debit card or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, they are then threatened with arrest, deportation or suspension of a business or driver's license. In many cases, the caller becomes hostile and insulting.

"If someone unexpectedly calls claiming to be from the IRS and threatens police arrest, deportation or license revocation if you don't pay immediately, that is a sign that it really isn't the IRS calling," Larsen stated.

Other characteristics of this scam include:

 Scammers use fake names and IRS badge numbers. They generally use common names and surnames to identify themselves.

- Scammers may be able to recite the last four digits of a victim's Social Security Number.
- Scammers spoof the IRS toll-free number or a 202 area code (Washington, D.C.) on caller ID to make it appear that it's the IRS calling.
- Scammers sometimes send bogus IRS emails to some victims to support their bogus calls.
- Victims hear background noise of other calls being conducted to mimic a call site.
- After threatening victims with jail time or driver's license revocation, scammers
  hang up and others soon call back pretending to be from the local police or DMV,
  and the caller ID supports their claim.

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS, here's what you should do:

- If you know you owe taxes or you think you might owe taxes, call the IRS at 1.800.829.1040. The IRS employees at that line can help you with a payment issue if there really is such an issue.
- If you know you don't owe taxes or have no reason to think that you owe any taxes (for example, you've never received a bill or the caller made some bogus threats as described above), then call and report the incident to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at 1.800.366.4484 or go to their website at treasury.gov/tigta.
- If you've been targeted by this scam, you should also contact the Federal Trade Commission and use their "FTC Complaint Assistant" at FTC.gov. Please add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments of your complaint.

Acting Special Agent in Charge Larsen encourages taxpayers to be vigilant against this phone scam. The perpetrators of this scam are not just targeting New Jersey taxpayers, but taxpayers throughout the United States.